

5989
THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN.

A
S E R M O N

ADDRESSED TO YOUNG PEOPLE,

Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, October 4. At Downend Chapel, near Bristol, October 11. And at Bratton, Wilts, October 28, 1789.

BY CALER EVANS, M. A. K

Per Scelera semper Sceleratus certum est iter.

SENeca.

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THE DEPT. OF THE ARMY

MEMORANDUM

ADDRESSED TO YOURS TRUST

Presented to the Committee of the House of Commons
on the 11th of May 1870
(Lancaster, 1870)

BY CALVERT, M. A.



Printed by W. L. G. & Co. 15, Abchurch Lane, London, E.C. 4.

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(Lancaster, 1870)

TO THE READER.

THE intrinsic excellence of the following discourse, and its general tendency to do good, are a sufficient apology for its being now offered to the public.

The Author, as will appear, had transcribed it for the press, in consequence of the letter he received October 4. 1789, and was going to commit it to the printer, when, unexpectedly, a Diploma came conferring on him the degree of Doctor of Divinity.

From an apprehension that it would be thought disrespectful to those who had honoured him with the title, if he printed without using it; and that it would have the appearance of ostentation, as if he printed for the sake of shewing it, should he assume it immediately upon its arrival, he gave up the intention; and thus the public sustained a loss through the prevalence of a principle of delicacy and modesty.

A short time before his death, he requested that none of his manuscript sermons might be printed, as he had not been able to transcribe them for the press: this prohibition disappointed the hopes of a great number of his friends and admirers, to many of whom he had given almost a promise that he would print, or at least prepare for the press, to be printed after his death, a volume or

two of those discourses, which he had reason to believe had been received with approbation, and had been made useful when delivered from the pulpit.

TO THE READER.

This sermon however could not be included in the prohibition, I have therefore prevailed on the family to permit its publication, and derive a very refined pleasure from the persuasion that the possession of it will be highly gratifying to the affectionate esteem of his numerous friends, and from the hope that the perusal of it will promote the interests of society by leaving on the minds of young persons, for whom the author more particularly intended it, a deep conviction of the deceitful nature and the fatal consequences of sin.

THOMAS DUNSCOMBE.

BRISTOL, *August 23, 1792.*

ADVERTISEMENT.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following plain practical Sermon, was drawn up with a view to deliver it to the young people at Bratton, according to annual custom, by the appointment of the late worthy Mr. Jeffery Whitaker, who for more than half a century had conducted a flourishing school in that place, with uncommon reputation and success. An awful circumstance determined the choice of the subject. In the month of August the school was burnt down, with all the furniture, books, &c. to the value of more than fifteen hundred pounds. In a few weeks afterwards the house to which the family removed, at Westbury, and which with the greatest humanity and generosity had been lent for the purpose by Gaisford Gibbs, Esq; was also burnt down, and, including wool, three thousand pounds worth of property destroyed, mostly Mr. Gibbs's. Upon strict enquiry it appeared, to the great astonishment and indignation of every one that heard of it, that the Incendiary in both instances was a lad in the school not quite sixteen years of age. A lad of an excellent capacity, virtuous education, apparently sober behaviour, and whose only inducement to such atrocious acts appears to have been an habit of pilfering, and a desire of avoiding the possibility of detection. An instance of human depravity, and of the deceitfulness of sin, scarcely to be paralleled in the annals of mankind! The unhappy youth, whilst in prison, in the month of November, found means to put a period to his existence, and thus awfully terminating his melan-

choly career, hurrying himself to that tribunal from which there is no appeal!

But this tremendous circumstance would not have induced me to print the sermon, if it had not been for the following Letter which I received from some young people unknown to me, the day after I first preached it to my own congregation in Bristol. The Letter is as follows.

BRISTOL, October 4, 1789.

DEAR SIR,

Several young men who were present at Broadmead Meeting this evening, from a heart-felt conviction of the truth and propriety of your observations on the deceitfulness of sin, are induced affectionately to entreat you to PUBLISH the same: in humble hope that the perusal of your sermon, through the power and blessing of God, may establish in our minds the present aversion we feel to iniquity, and produce in others those happy effects which we humbly trust it has in us.

Sunday evening 9 o'Clock.

To the Rev. Caleb Evans, Bristol.

This letter in connection with the awful events which first led me to the consideration of the subject, made me think it possible that some good end might be answered by my complying with the unexpected request contained in it, which at length, after consulting some of my friends to whose judgment I pay the greatest deference, I determined to do. I now commit this unadorned composition accordingly

accordingly to the candour of the public, and the blessing of God. And should the hope of those young men respecting it be in any degree accomplished, and but one young sinner should by means of it be preserved from the deceitfulness of sin, it will afford me the highest satisfaction in having complied with their request, as there is no wish lies nearer my heart, than that of being made the happy instrument in the hands of God of saving souls from death.

CALEB EVANS.

BRISTOL, *December* 12, 1789.

THE

according to the custom of the public, and the blessing
of God. And should the hope of some young man
resting in be in any degree diminished, and that some
young man should by means of it be preserved from the
deceitfulness of sin, it will afford me the highest satisfac-
tion in having complied with their request, as it is to be
with less noise and less than of being made the
happy instrument in the hands of God of saving souls
from death.

CAROL FAYNE

Barstow, October 18, 1839.

THE

THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN.

A

S E R M O N &c.

HEBREWS iii. 18.

EXHORT ONE ANOTHER DAILY, WHILST IT IS
CALLED TO DAY, LEST ANY OF YOU BE
HARDENED THROUGH THE DECEITFULNESS
OF SIN.

MANY anxious enquiries have been made by men of different characters, and in different and far distant climes and ages of the world, after the chief good. And the question which circulates amongst the generality of mankind, of every rank and description, and which interests and agitates their feelings more than any other, is still the same, Who will shew me any good; any solid, substantial, satisfying, lasting good? But how few appear at all concerned to know what

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is the *chief evil* of human nature and human life? And yet how vain must it be to enquire after the chief good, and how to obtain it, till we have first detected the chief evil, and learned how to avoid it, or obtain deliverance from it?

Now whatever be the chief good of man, certain it is that the chief evil of man is SIN, and till that is subdued, and salvation from it obtained, all our enquiries after the chief good must be as ridiculous, as they will be vain and fruitless. As much so, as though made by prisoners in a dungeon, or lepers in an hospital; whose first concern, every one must see, ought to be to obtain liberty and health, without which no other blessing of human life could be enjoyed by them.

But alas, how little is sin considered as the chief evil of human life! How seldom do men look upon it as that which dispoils them of all their excellency and beauty, deforms and debases their very nature and character, and lays the ax to the root of all their happiness! We hear multitudes daily crying out, What shall we eat, what shall we drink, wherewithal shall we be clothed? How shall we accumulate wealth, rise in the scale of honor and worldly distinction,
or

or gratify our love of pleasure? But amidst the general buz of business and hurry, amusement and dissipation, when do we hear the still, small, plaintive voice of penitence and religion, crying out What shall we do to be saved?

But this is the voice, my Brethren, we wish to hear from all, this is the voice which best becomes us, and which will most effectually tend to our present and future everlasting happiness. Sin, and sin alone can ruin us. There is nothing in all the world so dangerous, so hardening, so destructive as sin.

Suffer me then, upon the present occasion, to turn your attention, especially that of the younger part of my audience, to this interesting subject.

Exhort one another daily, says the Apostle in our text, while it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened, through the deceitfulness of sin. Sin is of a very deceitful nature; if it were not so, it would be universally detested, and men would dread every approach to it as much as the Plague, or Death. And it is of a hardening nature; it renders the heart callous and unfeeling, insensible of its situation and danger, and uncon-

cerned about the consequences. And when we consider the shortness and uncertainty of human life, and the unalterable eternal nature of that state to which death introduces us; what can be more interesting and important, than that we should exhort one another daily, lest we should any of us be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin?

Permit me then to solicit your serious attention to the following particulars.

I. Beware of the deceitful appearances sin assumes.

If sin appeared to the deluded sinner as it really is, instead of being seduced by it, he would start back from it with horror, he would be disgusted with it, he would loath and abhor it, and with virtuous indignation cry out, How shall I do this GREAT EVIL, and sin against God? But he takes a partial view of it, contemplates it through the medium of sense and passion, and thus it's true nature is in a great measure hid, it appears alluring, he is captivated by it, and it gains an imperceptible ascendancy over him.

To

To view sin as it is, we should consider it in its true nature, as consisting in any want of conformity unto, as our Catechism very properly defines it, or transgression of the LAW OF GOD. We should then contemplate that law, of which sin is a violation; the justice, the goodness, the reasonableness of it. We should consider the rightful authority by which it is established, arising from the nature and character of the great eternal God, and our relation to him, and absolute constant dependance upon him as his creatures, made by his power and supported by his bounty; so that his dominion over us is not only perfect and absolute in the highest degree, but just, as it is absolute. We should further consider the law of God itself, which appears to be framed, not so much to shew the authority, as to demonstrate the benevolence of its gracious Author. Had we ourselves been called into being and consulted before hand about it, we could not have objected to it, but must, if we had any regard to our own happiness, have cordially approved of it. And if we would form a just estimate of sin, we must also take an enlarged extensive view of that law of God which sin opposes, and, as far as it can, overturns. We should view it in all the good effects connected with a cheerful hearty obedience to it, and in all the ill effects that

that flow from the breach and violation of it. And what can be more palpably evident than that obedience to the law of God does in the very nature of it produce happiness, and consequently disobedience misery? No fact can possibly be plainer, than that universal holiness would necessarily be productive of universal happiness.

Let us suppose a society of human beings, (would to God it were more than a supposition!) under the pure influence of the law of God, that divine and most excellent law, the vital substance of which is love to God, and love to man. Would they lose any one real, rational enjoyment of which their natures were capable? If they would, name it. But what enjoyment either personal or social could they be deprived of, by the constant unremitting exercise of ardent love to God, and sincere unfeigned love one to another? Would they not be perfectly free from the greatest evils that embitter human life, and poison the source of self-enjoyment and happiness? In such a virtuous society there would be no impious swearers, no drunkards, no whoremongers nor unclean persons, no sabbath breakers, no selfish misers, no thoughtless spendthrifts; none of the unjust, the rapacious, the wanton, the idle, the profane, the discontented, the peevish, the

the envious, the jealous, the malicious, the unthankful, or any of the other tribes of finners; but in this Holy mountain of the Lord, there would be no hurting nor destroying.

And would not such a society partake of the most exalted and distinguishing positive pleasures? What pleasures equal to those of devotion and friendship? To contemplate the great and blessed God, to realize his bright perfections, to rejoice in his providence, to embrace his promises, to set him always before us, to hold fellowship with him and with his Son Jesus Christ, to behold his glory in the mirror of his law and gospel too, and and to be changed into his likeness from glory to glory—how divinely elevating, how supremely delightful! And to love one another in God, and for his sake, with a pure heart, fervently, mutually doing his will from the heart, and delighting in all the offices of reciprocal friendship and love, whereby we may promote the happiness of each other and the happiness of all with whom we have to do; what can be imagined so pleasing and transporting!

But sin is that cruel demon that hates such society as this, and such happiness, and does all in it's power to pervert and destroy both the one and

and the other. Sin, let it assume what form it will, and by whatever name it be called, is a deadly enemy to universal beauty, order, harmony, and happiness. Independent of the threatned penal consequences of it, what tongue can describe the confusion, the discord, the strife, the disorder, the misery it has brought into the world? It has thrown a dark cloud over human life, and spread a poisonous influence through every society, every family, every heart, into which it hath entered. Is there even in the present state, scarcely a single evil felt or feared, which does not as naturally grow out of sin, as the branches of a tree grow out of the tree which produces and supports them? Men may trifle with sin and make a mock, of it, calling it by delusive names, and deceiving their own souls; but nothing can be more certain, than that it is an evil of enormous size, the chief evil of human nature and human life, that abominable thing which God hateth, destructive of all true happiness, and the parent of misery.

The man that seduces and betrays virtuous innocence, may varnish over his guilt by giving it the name of gallantry. But in the sight of a holy God, holy angels, and holy good men, he will appear in no other light than that of an in-
fidious

hicious base betrayer, a relentless murderer; the work of murderers, a murderer of unsuspecting innocence, of virtue, of peace, of happiness. Let such an unfeeling being, only realize for a moment the consequences, that must result from the general prevalence of such conduct as that which he countenances, and sanctions by his own example, and surely he must be terrified at the picture of his own deformity. Let him suppose he has a sister, or a daughter, who falls a prey to such treachery as he has himself practised, and instead of boasting of his gallantry, he will be ashamed of his cruelty, and, hiding his guilty head, cry out What have I done!

The drunkard often hides the deformity of his vice, by giving it the specious flattering names of sociability, conviviality, and cheerfulness. But if such sociability, conviviality, and cheerfulness were to become general, it would turn the world into a den of beasts, rather than the habitation of rational, intellectual, moral beings.

Covetousness, that narrow minded sordid vice, is often hid under the covering of prudent frugality and carefulness. But were such frugality and carefulness to become general, it would stagnate human life, destroy the very end and de-

sign of the bounties of providence, render them from generation to generation useless and unprofitable, serving only to nourish the most despicable of all pride, the pride of wealth, and making us greedy misers instead of good and benevolent neighbours.

On the other hand, wanton profusion and prodigality, assumes the name of noble exalted generosity. But it is a low selfish generosity, and has only self gratification for it's object. It is a wasteful unjust generosity, and were it to become general, it would be as ruinous as it is unjust and inconsiderate. But it would be endless, were we to pretend to enumerate the many disguises and false colors under which the enormity of sin is frequently concealed, and by which it imposes upon and deceives the inconsiderate sinner.

Sin however, it should be remembered, is sin still, whatever forms it may assume, and when viewed as it is, cannot but appear exceeding sinful, odious and detestable in it's nature and tendency, and destructive of order, beauty, harmony and happiness in it's consequences.

Beware,

Beware, oh beware young people, how you admit for a moment into your bosom light thoughts of sin. You may be tempted to think it, in those instances in which your passions plead for the indulgence of it, comparatively innocent and harmless, but be assured you will find it to your cost far otherwise. Our first parents were flattered that they should be as Gods, but they found the deceitfulness of sin, in its bringing them under the sentence of death. If sin were of so light a nature as many are inclined to consider it, a benevolent God would never have guarded us against it by such awful sanctions. There is no evil in all nature like the evil of sin, no evil so great in itself, so dangerous, so hardening, so deceitful. To play with sin, to trifle with sin, is to play upon the hole of the Asp, and to put our hand upon the Cockatrice den. However alluring it may appear for a moment, in the end it will sting like a Serpent and bite like an Adder. Let us then exhort one another daily to beware of its devices.

II. Especially when we consider the rapid insensible progress of it.

It is of the most insinuating nature, and gains the ascendancy over the soul ere we are aware.

How many young sinners, when they have first set out in the ways of sin, and departed from their God and the way of his commandments, would have trembled at the very thought of such sins, as they have soon after learned to commit without shame or remorse? Like Hanael, who said to the prophet, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" Which nevertheless soon after he had brutality enough to accomplish. It is an old saying, that no man becomes all at once the worst of men; but I suppose there is nothing in which a swifter progress is made, than there is in sin. Sooner do men attain to an awful kind of eminence in sin, than in any thing else. It is so congenial to their corrupt depraved natures, it so enflames the passions, creates such an increasing thirst after further gratifications, is so restless and dissatisfied with every thing obtained, and so loosens those moral principles by which the power of conscience is alone maintained; that it rapidly and insensibly leads the sinner on further and further, till he is overwhelmed in guilt and pollution, and hardened against every motive to contrition and penitence.

Young people, beware of the first beginnings of sin. Sin is a downward road, and the sinner that enters upon it is soon hurried from sin to sin ere

ere he is aware, till at length, "starting he wakes, and finds himself undone." Few are so hardened at first, as to give themselves up to the dominion of sin entirely, and abandon all thoughts of God and religion, at least amongst those who have had a religious education, and sat under the sound of the gospel. They generally flatter themselves with the hope of a speedy return from their wanderings, and intend not to proceed far, or continue long in the ways of sin. They begin perhaps with sins of omission, neglecting known duty, first in private, then in public; they soon go on to sins of commission; first to such sins as are comparatively small, and as they think most venial, then they get bolder, and proceed to sins of a more atrocious and aggravated nature, and being once free from the restraint of the fear of God, go on with increasing rapidity from one stage of guilt to another, grow harder and harder, till they become capable of the greatest enormities, and make themselves completely vessels of wrath, fitted only for destruction.

Could I draw back the curtain, and disclose to your view the awful realities of the invisible world, and relate to you those horrid tales of woe, which many guilty beings there, could tell; how many would you shudder to hear of, who

once

once bid fair for heaven, as perhaps some of you may now do, but harkening to the voice of temptation, were through the deceitfulness of sin soon plunged into hell: soon hurried from the scenes of their fancied joys, to those abodes of misery, where there is nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth? Would you tread in their steps, and share their doom? If not, beware of the deceitfulness of sin, touch not, taste not, handle not, but flee youthful lusts, which war against the soul.

III. Consider further, the awful and inevitable doom of the impenitent sinner.

A doom as certain, as it is just and awful. God hath said, the soul that sinneth it shall die. Not die so as to become extinct and live no more, that would be an event highly desirable to the sinner; but that is not the death threatened. It is the death of hope, the death of enjoyment and happiness, the death of the soul, eternal death. It is the second death, the worm that never dies, the fire that is never quenched. It denotes a state of punishment, everlasting punishment, a banishment, from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power. It includes in it a state of shame, of shame for which no excuse can be offered,

offered, no palliative admitted: and of contempt
 not to be covered, and which cannot be avoided,
 everlasting contempt. The eternal God hath
 decreed irrevocably decreed, that all impenitent
 sinners shall go away into this state of everlasting
 death and punishment; where hope never
 enters, but sullen black despair holds an absolute
 everlasting dominion. Broad as the road of sin
 is, and many as there be that walk in it, destruc-
 tion, sure, everlasting destruction is at the end
 of it. Whatever may be the present thoughts of
 sinners concerning it, blinded and infatuated as
 they are by the deceitfulness of sin, which leads
 them to call sweet bitter, and bitter sweet, to put
 light for darkness, and darkness for light, this
 shall they all most assuredly have at the hands of
 a holy God, they shall lie down in sorrow. The
 end of these things is death. Often does sin
 prove ruinous to the sinner in the present state,
 ruinous to his health, to his fortune, to his pros-
 perity, to his happiness, bringing with it disease,
 and poverty, and wretchedness and misery, and
 untimely death. But should it not be so, but
 the sinners eyes stand out with fatness and he
 should flourish for awhile like a green bay tree,
 yet shall it surely prove ruinous to him in a fu-
 ture state, in which, as it is awfully expressed in
 scripture, God himself, " Shall despise their
 image."

image." When the great day of his wrath shall come, who shall be able to stand?

Or, were it not for those threatened positive punishments which a holy God hath denounced against sin and sinners, sin is in itself of such a nature as to make it impossible for an impenitent sinner to be happy. He cannot see the Kingdom of God. Heaven itself would be no heaven to him; Hell, awful thought! is his only proper, however dreadful element. Sin promises the sinner happiness, but it deceives him, it cannot make him happy, but must and will make him, by the unalterable decree of heaven, inconceivably miserable both in this life and that which is to come. O stand in awe then, Young People, and sin not. Awake to righteousness, cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon him, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon him. But oh beware of the deceitfulness of sin, for the paths thereof, smooth and gay as they may appear for a moment, lead down to hell.

IV. And

IV: And lastly, Consider the time is short.

How short, it is not possible to say, but very short at the longest. The youngest in this congregation cannot boast of one poor to-morrow. We dare say to every one of you, Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth! Ten thousand unexpected occurrences may take place to cut short thy thread of life, and send thee into an eternal world. In such an hour as we think not the Son of Man cometh. Young Man, art thou in thy sins, are thy sins unrepented of, unforgiven; is thy heart unchanged, unrenewed, unsanctified? Think, oh think whilst it is called to day, as it is expressed in the words of the text, what a state thou art in, and to what thou art exposed. Art thou tempted to postpone the enquiry to an uncertain hereafter? Has the deceitfulness of sin so far imposed upon thee as to lead thee to say to conscience, to conviction, to exhortation, "Go thy way at this time, at a more convenient season I will call for thee?" Remember God says, to day. To day, whilst it is called to day, harden not your hearts. No season so proper, so convenient as the present. Behold now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation!

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Beg of God then, By his holy Spirit, to change your hearts, to give you new hearts and to renew right spirits within you, to turn you to himself that you may be indeed turned, to wash your guilty souls in the blood of the Lamb, to lead you in the paths of righteousness, to guide you by his counsel, and afterwards receive you to glory. He is a God hearing prayer, slow to anger, abundant in goodness and in truth; his ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts contracted like ours, but as high above them as the heavens are above the earth. If you seek him he will be found of you, and him that cometh he will in no wise cast out.

But this night thy soul may be required of thee, this exhortation may be the last that shall ever be addressed to thee, and oh how wilt thou escape if the great salvation be still neglected by thee? Suffer me to plead with you on behalf of your precious souls, solemnly to warn you against the deceitful hardening nature of sin, and that whilst it is called to day and before the night of death cometh. Oh how dreadful to be surprized in sin, and hurried into eternity in a sinful impenitent state! Oh how wretched those, who "to the mercies of a moment leave, the vast concerns of an eternal scene."

Seek

Seek ye then the Lord while he may be found,
 call ye upon him whilst he is near, and beg of
 him by his spirit and grace, to deliver you from
 the snares of death. And may you go away with
 this plain and evident, but infinitely important
 truth, powerfully impressed upon all your hearts,
*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and to
 depart from evil that is understanding.*

THE END.

Lately published by the same Author,
CHRIST CRUCIFIED, four discourses upon the doctrine of the atonement, in which the objections of Dr. Priestly to that doctrine are candidly considered.

Price Two Shillings sewed.

The following account of this work is given, in the Analytical Review for September, 1789.

"Mr. EVANS thinks the atonement to be the grand distinguishing doctrine of the New Testament, the glory of christianity and the most illustrious display of the divine perfections and character, with these sentiments he vindicates it against the arguments of Socinians and others, with a manly but temperate zeal, by discoursing on *Cor. I. 23, 24*.

The language is chaste, perspicuous and familiar. However other writers may differ in opinion from the author, they cannot but admire his fervent and unaffected piety, and the genuine candour with which he maintains his sentiments."

12 MR 58

Just Published, and to be had of the several Booksellers mentioned in the title page of the Sermon,—

The **TRIBUTE** of AFFECTION to the memory of the late Dr. EVANS.—A Discourse addressed to the **BRISTOL EDUCATION SOCIETY**, at their annual meeting in *Broadmead*, August 22, 1792, by T. DUNSCOMBE.

To which is added,

An **ADDRESS** delivered to the **STUDENTS** by Dr. EVANS, in the year 1770.